

Sanguine spirits without number have probably been influenced in modern times by the ancient history of mere heroes ; but persons of a reflective disposition have been incomparably more affected by the contemplation of those men whose combination of mental power with illustrious virtue constitutes the supreme glory of heathen antiquity. And why do I deem the admiration of this noble display of moral excellence pernicious to these reflective minds, in relation to the religion of Christ ? For the simplest possible reason ; because the principles of that excellence are not identical with the principles of this religion ; as I believe every serious and self-observant man who has been attentive to them both, will have verified in his own experience. He has felt the animation which pervaded his soul, in musing on the virtues, the sentiments, and the great actions, of these dignified men, suddenly expiring, when he has attempted to prolong or transfer it to the virtues, sentiments, and actions, of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Sometimes he has, with mixed wonder and indignation, remonstrated with his own feelings, and has said, I know there is the highest excellence in the religion of the Messiah, and in the characters of his most magnanimous followers ; and surely it is *excellence* also that attracts me to those other illustrious men ; why then cannot I take a full delightful interest in them both ? But it is in vain ; he finds this amphibious devotion impossible. And he will always find it so ; for, antecedently to experience, it would be obvious that the order of sentiments which animated the one form of excellence, is extremely diverse from that which is the vitality of the other. If the whole system of a Christian's sentiments is required to be exactly adjusted to the economy of redemption, they must be widely different from those of the men, however wise or virtuous, who never thought or heard of the Saviour of the world ; else where is the peculiarity or importance of this new dispensation, which does however both avow and manifest a most signal peculiarity, and with which heaven has connected the signs and declarations of infinite importance ? If, again, a Christian's grand object and solicitude is to please God, this must constitute his moral excellence (even though the